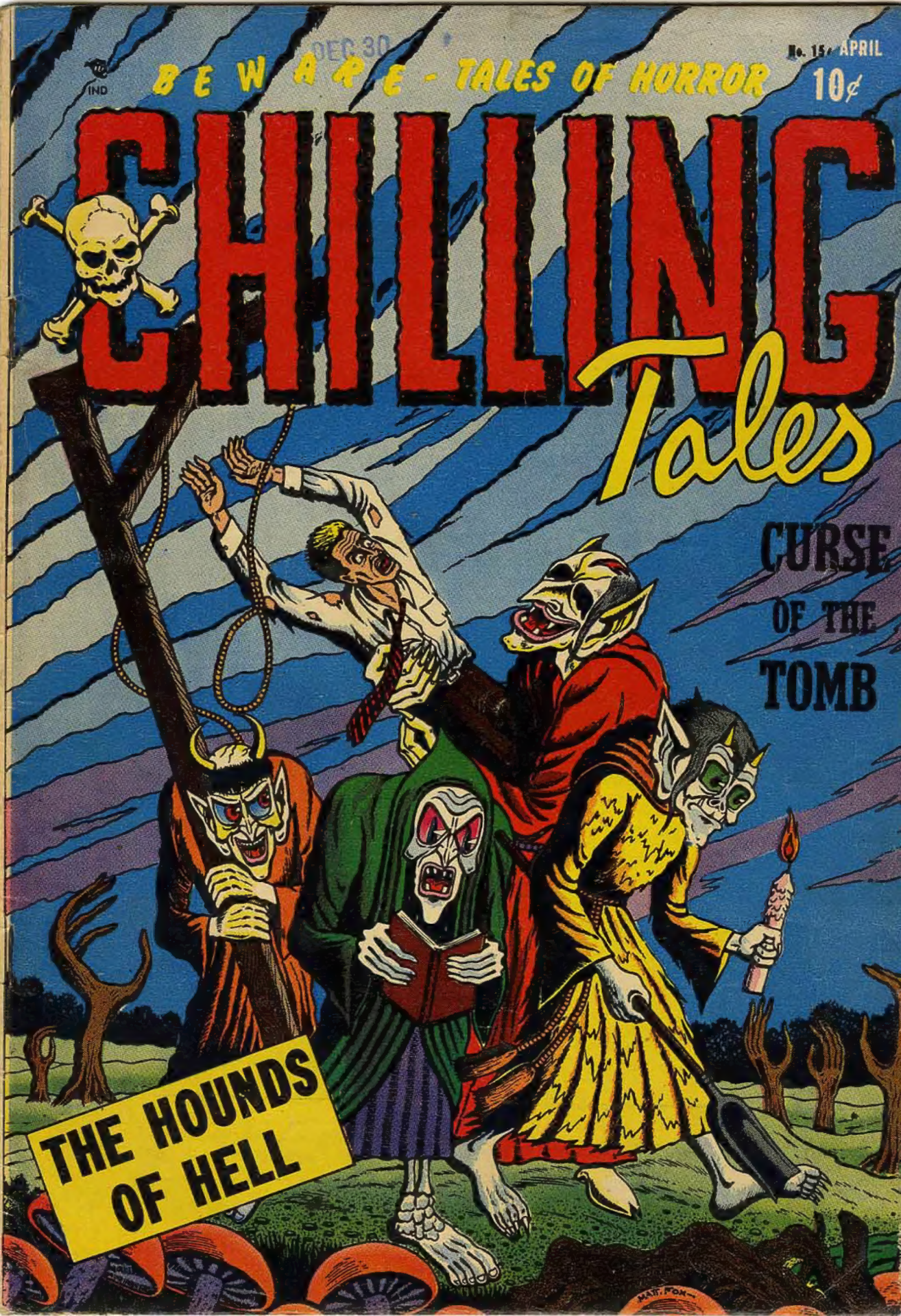
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THROUGH THE DARK NIGHT, ASTRIDE A COAL BLACK STEED, RODE CONRAD, LORD OF FALKENBURG, ON A DEMON HUNT THAT STRUCK MAD TERROR IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO SAW THEM. AND BY HIS SIDE, RODE THE BLACK HUNTSMAN AND HIS SLAVERING PACK ...

# THE HOUNDS of HELL

THE GREAT HALL OF FALKENBURG CASTLE, THE NIGHT BEFORE THE ANNUAL HUNT..

TO, CONRAD, LORD OF FALKENBURG, WHO CAN OUTRIDE AND OUTHUNT ANY MAN -- AND WHO FEARS NO LIVING CREATURE!

TO CONRAD!

THANK YOU! FOR ME THERE IS NO GREATER SPORT THAN THE HUNT. AYE, FOR SPORT I WOULD RIDE WITH THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS HIMSELF!

CAREFUL, CONRAD! CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY!

I FEAR NO ONE! NOT EVEN THE DEVIL HIMSELF! TO THE HUNT!

HE HAD BETTER HOLD HIS TONGUE. THE BLACK HUNTSMAN MAY BE LISTENING THIS VERY MOMENT...

THE NEXT MORNING, AS CONRAD'S BEAUTIFUL WIFE, BALDOUR, GIVES HIM A STIRRUP CUP BEFORE HE LEAVES FOR THE HUNT...

TAKE CARE, MY LORD. I FEAR FOR YOUR SAFETY.

DO NOT FEAR, BELOVED. I WILL RETURN SAFELY.

WAIT FOR ME IN THE TOWER. THEN YOU MAY SEE OUR TRIUMPHANT RETURN LONG BEFORE WE ARRIVE.

AYE, MY LORD, I WILL WAIT. FOR YOU I WOULD WAIT FOREVER. GOD SPEED!

SOME HOURS LATER, DEEP IN THE FOREST, THE HUNTERS SIGHT THEIR QUARRY...

LOOK! A STAG!

SOUND THE HORN! AFTER HIM!

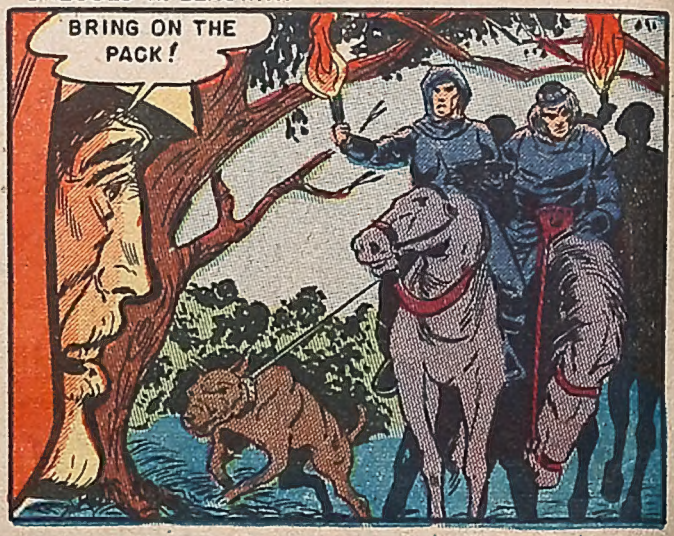
AS THEY RIDE AT TOP SPEED AFTER THE FLEEING STAG CONRAD SHOUTS A CHALLENGE...

A PURSE OF GOLD TO THE ONE WHO CAN OVERTAKE HIM BEFORE I DO!

SOON CONRAD HAD OUTDISTANCED THE OTHERS. JUST AS HE IS ABOUT TO OVERTAKE THE FLEETFOOTED ANIMAL...
NOW I'VE GOT HIM...
YEE!!!
KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS, CONRAD LIES AS IF DEAD, WHILE HIS HORSE RUNS ON...
OHHH!...
WHEN HE FINALLY COMES TO, HE DISCOVERS THAT HE IS LOST AND ALONE...
I AM SURE THIS IS THE WAY I CAME. I MUST GET BACK TO THE OTHERS. THEY WILL BE WAITING FOR ME...
BUT IT IS NOT TO BE. FOR FIVE DAYS CONRAD WANDERS THROUGH THE MAZE OF FOREST, UNTIL WEAK AND IN DESPAIR, HE IS ABOUT TO GIVE UP.. SUDDENLY.....
I SHALL NEVER SEE BALDOUR AGAIN. NEVER!...
YES, YOU WILL!
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?
TO TAKE YOU TO BALDOUR. SPEND THIS ONE NIGHT HUNTING WITH ME, AND AT BREAK OF DAY I WILL PUT YOU DOWN BY THE GATE OF FALKENBURG.
WILLINGLY! BUT I AM DYING WITH THIRST AND HUNGER. I COULD NOT EVEN MOUNT A HORSE, AND TO HUNT IS BEYOND MY POWER.
DRINK THIS.
3

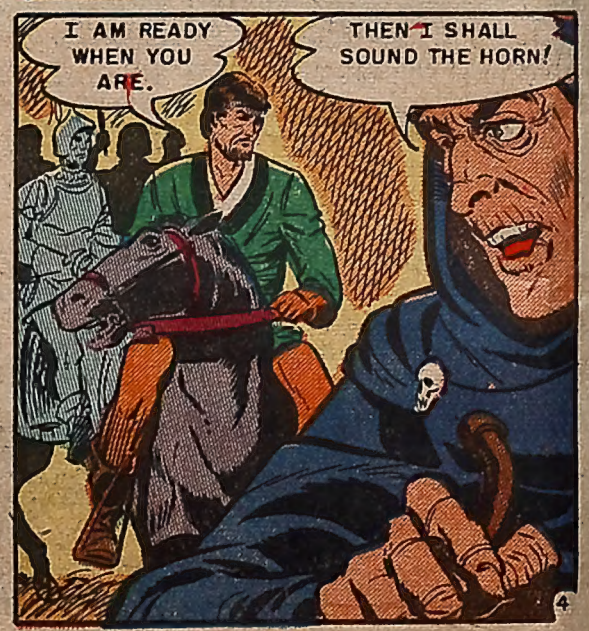
A MIRACLE! I FEEL BETTER THAN I HAVE EVER FELT IN MY LIFE! COME ON, I WILL HUNT WITH YOU ALL NIGHT, IF I CAN SEE BALDOUR IN THE MORNING.
HUNT'S UP!

THEN FROM THE THICKET RIDES A GROUP OF HUNTSMEN DRESSED IN BLACK!...



FROM THE THICKET POUR THE GROOMS HOLDING IN LEASH THE TERRIBLE, SLAVERING HOUNDS OF HELL!
AND NOW, HORSES FOR MY GUEST AND MYSELF!

TWO GIANT, COAL-BLACK STEEDS ARE BROUGHT FORWARD.....
AND NOW, IF YOU ARE STILL OF A MIND TO HUNT WITH US, CHOOSE A HORSE.
I AM! I WILL TAKE THIS ONE.



RAISING HIS HORN, THE OLD MAN SOUNDS A FRIGHTFUL BLAST THAT ROLLS OUT ON THE MIDNIGHT AIR IN WAVES OF TERROR...

EEERRR

AND WHEREVER IT IS HEARD, THE DREADFUL SOUND SENDS CHILLS OF FEAR TO THE LISTENER'S HEART...

WOE TO ANYONE WHO VENTURES OUT THIS NIGHT. THE DEMONS RIDE!

LOCK THE DOOR AND BOLT THE WINDOWS. I WILL BE GLAD WHEN THIS NIGHT IS OVER.

BOARRR

THE AWFUL HUNT IS ON, AS THE DEMON PACK AND THE TERRIBLE HUNTSMEN RACE THROUGH THE EERIE FOREST, WITH CONRAD AT THEIR SIDE.

HAHAHAHA! I WILL SHOW YOU REAL SPORT THIS NIGHT!

FOR THE FIRST TIME CONRAD FEELS THE ICY FINGERS OF FEAR AND TRIES TO THROW HIMSELF FROM HIS MOUNT...

I CANNOT DISMOUNT. SOMETHING HOLDS ME IN THE SADDLE!

LOOKING DOWN, CONRAD IS TERRIFIED TO DISCOVER HIS STIRRUPS ARE MONSTROUS, LIVING THINGS, THAT HOLD HIM FAST...

ONWARD THEY RUSH THROUGH THE NIGHT AND SUDDENLY A MONSTER STAG, BATHED IN FLAME SPRINGS INTO VIEW...

NO! IT IS A BEAST FROM HELL!

EEEAARROOOO!

I CAN STAND IT NO LONGER... NO LONGER... UNHHH!

WHEN THE MISTS CLEAR, CONRAD FINDS HIMSELF ALONE GALLOPING TOWARD AN ANCIENT AND COLOSSAL PILE WHOSE WINDOWS BLAZE WITH LIGHT...

WHERE AM I BEING TAKEN?

UP THE RUINED STAIRS OF THE BUILDING THE MONSTER HORSE CARRIES HIS UNWILLING CAPTIVE...

HE'S TAKING ME INSIDE! NO!

STRAIGHT INTO THE HUGE HALL OF THE CASTLE THE BEAST CARRIES HIM, AND THERE WAITING IS THE OLD MAN AND HIS BLACK HUNTSMEN....

WELCOME, CONRAD. NOW YOU MUST SUP WITH US AFTER OUR GREAT HUNT.

NO, NO. LET ME GO!

YOU WILL SUP WITH US! I HAVE SPOKEN!

BALDOUR! I WANT TO GO BACK TO BALDOUR.

BUT AT THAT MOMENT THE FIRST STREAKS OF THE COMING DAY STREAMS IN THROUGH THE WINDOWS, AND FROM AFAR COMES A COCK'S CROW ....
GENTLEMEN, IT IS TIME WE WERE GONE!...

SUDDENLY THE WALLS SEEM TO SPLIT AND THE CEILING OPENS TO THE AWFUL CRASH OF THUNDER...
HAHAHAHA! GOODBYE, LORD OF FALKENBURG! GOODBYE!

AHAHAHA
OHH!
AN ICY COLD WIND BEATS UPON CONRAD'S FACE AS THE BLACK FORMS OF HIS COMPANIONS STREAK UPWARD THROUGH THE AIR....

SUDDENLY ALL IS QUIET AND CONRAD OPENS HIS EYES TO FIND HIMSELF BEFORE THE GATES OF FALKENBURG...
I AM HOME! I AM HOME!... BUT, BUT EVERYTHING IS CHANGED!

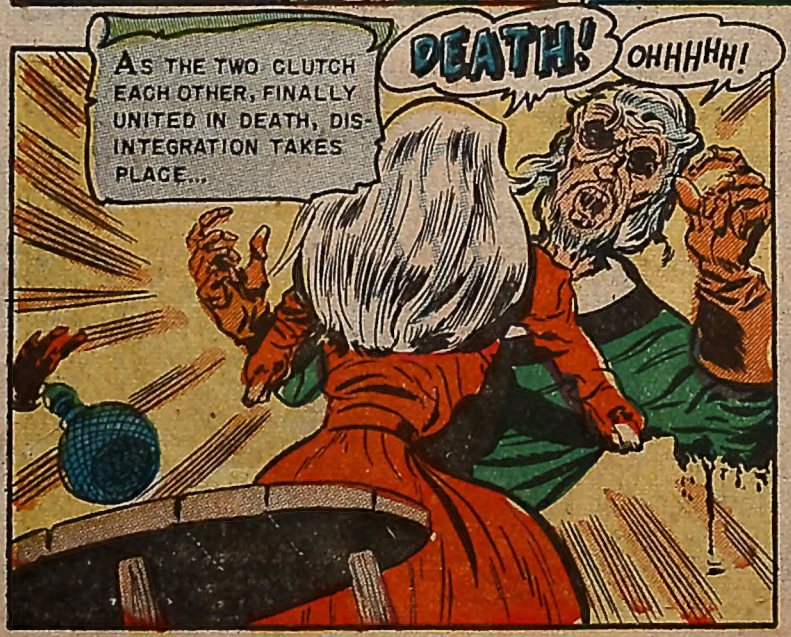
BALDOUR! WHAT HAS BECOME OF HER?

THROUGH ROOM AFTER ROOM OF THE ONCE THRIVING CASTLE HE HURRIES, ONLY TO FIND THEM EMPTY AND DESERTED. AT LAST HE REACHES THE TOWER ROOM...

TELL ME, OLD WOMAN, WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE? WHAT HAS BECOME OF BALDOUR, THE BEAUTIFUL?
I AM BALDOUR. FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS HAVE I WAITED HERE. WAITED FOR YOU, CONRAD, AS I ONCE PROMISED.

YOU... YOU BALDOUR? BUT.. BUT I HAVE ONLY BEEN GONE A FEW DAYS. IT... IT IS IMPOSSIBLE.
NO, CONRAD. THE YEARS HAVE ROLLED BY. ONLY I HAVE SURVIVED TO GREET YOU.

SUDDENLY A STRANGE THING HAPPENS. CONRAD SLOWLY TURNS INTO A HIDEOUS, SHRUNKEN OLD MAN...



A MOMENT LATER ALL THAT REMAINS IS THE DUST OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN TWO HUMANS--A WARNING TO THOSE WHO DARE CHALLENGE THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS!....

THE END

# THE MONSTER

OUT OF THE PIT CAME A THING OF HORROR SEARCHING FOR HUMAN PREY. FEW KNEW OF THE EXISTENCE OF THIS BEAST OF TERROR SPAWNED IN THE SLIME OF AGE-OLD EVIL, BUT THOSE WHO DID KNOW TURNED FAINT WITH FEAR AT THE VERY MENTION OF ITS NAME....

A SHIPPING CONCERN ALONG THE WATERFRONT OF A COASTAL CITY...

LOOK AT THIS HEADLINE! THOSE NEWSPAPERS WILL DO ANYTHING FOR CIRCULATION.

THEY SURE WILL. LOOK AT THAT SCAREHEAD.

CITY TERRIFIED MANIAC KILLER STILL FREE

I'M TOO TIRED TO WORRY ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT. I'M HEADING FOR HOME AND BED. I'VE HAD A HARD DAY.

YOU HAD BETTER BE CAREFUL, JOE. THE KILLER IS SUPPOSED TO HANG AROUND THE WATER-FRONT. HE'LL BE COMING AFTER YOU.

HUH! IF I SEE THAT LUNATIC, I'LL TAKE HIM WITH ONE HAND... GOODNIGHT, SAM!
GOODNIGHT. SEE YOU TOMORROW.
OUTSIDE THE OFFICE, JOE PICKS HIS WAY ACROSS THE DANK, FOG-FILLED GLOOM THAT ENGULFS THE WATER-FRONT...
BRRR! IT'S A NASTY NIGHT. THE DAMPNESS CREEPS RIGHT INTO MY BONES...
SECONDS LATER, A THING OF HORROR LEAPS FROM THE DARKNESS. FROM IT COMES THE PUTRID SMELL OF DEATH.
HELP! HELP! UHHH...
I'LL BE GLAD WHEN I GET HOME AND... AHHHHH!
AS JOE'S CRIES WEAKEN, A PIER GUARD RUNS UP...
SOMEBODY'S IN TROUBLE! THERE THEY ARE!
HELP.. OHHHH..
WHAT TH...? I MUST HAVE HIT HIM! THE FOG IS RUINING MY AIM!
NO...NO! DON'T GO AFTER IT! IT...IT WILL DESTROY... YOU...

THE MARK OF THE KALD! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! IT CAN'T BE! NOT HERE IN AMERICA!

WHEN THE POLICE AND REPORTERS ARRIVE...

WHAT'S YOUR NAME? WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

MY NAME IS LEO PASHENKO. I'M THE GUARD AT THIS PIER. YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL YOU ABOUT IT...

THIS MAN WAS KILLED BY A KALD! A TERROR FROM OUT OF HELL ITSELF. WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I LIVED IN SERBIA. I OFTEN HEARD OF SUCH MONSTERS.

NOW TAKE IT EASY! THIS HAS BEEN A LITTLE TOO MUCH FOR YOU.

NO! YOU MUST LISTEN! THESE BEASTS ASSUME HUMAN SHAPES TO GET THE BLOOD NECESSARY TO KEEP THEM ALIVE, LIKE THE VAMPIRE.

OKAY, OKAY. MAYBE YOU'D BETTER GO HOME AND GET A LITTLE REST. I'LL TALK WITH YOU TOMORROW.

IF YOU WILL ONLY LISTEN. THIS MONSTER MUST BE DESTROYED BEFORE HE KILLS ANY OTHERS. I ALONE KNOW HOW TO DO IT. I KNOW HOW!

SURE! SURE! NOW GO ON HOME AND DON'T BOTHER ME. I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING... YOU'LL BE FINE BY THEN.

AS PASHENKO MAKES HIS WAY HOME THROUGH THE DARKENED STREETS...

I WAS A FOOL TO SPEAK. I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THEY WOULD NEVER BELIEVE... YEAHHH!

DON'T BE ALARMED. I'M ONE OF THE REPORTERS COVERING THE MURDER. I HEARD YOUR STORY, AND I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.

WHEW! YOU NEARLY SCARED ME TO DEATH. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I COULDN'T SAY ANYTHING BACK THERE, BUT I BELIEVE WHAT YOU TOLD THEM. I, TOO, COME FROM SERBIAN PARENTS. I HAVE HEARD OF THE KALD.

THEN YOU KNOW THE DANGER THAT EXISTS AS LONG AS IT ROAMS LOOSE. I AM GOING TO SEND IT BACK TO THE DARKNESS THAT SPAWNED IT.

I WANT TO HELP YOU.

GOOD! WE WILL GO TO MY ROOMS. THERE WE WILL PREPARE CHARMS SUCH AS MY MOTHER MADE TO PROTECT THE WEARER FROM EVIL... THEN WE WILL BE READY TO DESTROY THIS BEAST OF HORROR.

AT PASHENKO'S HOUSE THEY PREPARE THE CHARMS AND THE NEXT MOVE OF THEIR DARING TASK....

WITH THESE CHARMS IT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO HARM US. NOW WE MUST FIND THE GRAVE OF THE VICTIM WHO PERISHED THE OTHER NIGHT.

THAT'S EASY. I HAVE BEEN COVERING THE STORY SINCE THIS REIGN OF TERROR BEGAN. I HAVE A LIST OF ALL THE VICTIMS AND WHERE THEY WERE BURIED.

THAT IS GOOD! WE WILL START AT ONCE. BUT FIRST, WE MUST STOP FOR SPADES AND A LAMP AT THE DOCK.

ALL RIGHT. BUT LET'S NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE KALD. IT IS DEADLY.

AS THE BELLS TOLL MIDNIGHT, THE TWO REACH THE CEMETERY WHERE THE KALD'S LAST VICTIM LIES...

QUICK! OVER THE WALL! IF WE ARE SEEN, ALL IS LOST.

I'M COMING.

AS THEY STEAL THROUGH THE SHRUBBERY THEY ARE HEARD...

THE WATCHMAN! GET DOWN!

SHHH! HE'S HEARD US!

IF WE ARE TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO, WE MUST GET HIM OUT OF THE WAY.

BUT HOW?

LIKE THIS!

UHHHHH!

STOP! STOP! YOU'RE KILLING HIM!

...UH.....

ARE YOU CRAZY? LET GO OF HIM!

NOW HE WILL BE QUIET. NOW HE CANNOT DISTURB US!

EASY! THIS THING IS BEGINNING TO GET YOU! CALM DOWN!

WHEN THE REPORTER FINALLY REGAINS HIS SELF-CONTROL.

HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT. I... I GUESS I LOST MY HEAD--LET'S GO FIND THE GRAVE.

ALL RIGHT. COME ON.

CAUTIOUSLY THEY SEARCH FOR THE GRAVE. AT LAST...
THIS LOOKS LIKE IT.
YES ...THIS IS THE GRAVE. GIVE ME THE SPADE.
HERE. WHEN YOU ARE TIRED I'LL TAKE OVER.
OKAY. THE FASTER WE WORK THE SOONER WE ARE DONE.
AN HOUR LATER...
I'M BEAT. HOW ABOUT YOU TAKING A TURN?
OKAY. HOP OUT AND I'LL DIG FOR AWHILE.
WHEN THEY CHANGE PLACES..
YOU DID WELL. ANOTHER FOOT OR SO AND WE WILL HAVE REACHED THE COFFIN.
YES! THE COFFIN. WE ARE ALMOST DONE!
WORKING DESPERATELY, PASHENKO FINALLY UNCOVERS THE COFFIN...
I'VE UNCOVERED IT!
OPEN IT! HURRY!
ANOTHER MOMENT AND..
IT IS OPEN. THROW DOWN THE... THE CHARM WE HAVE PREPARED!
AT LAST! AT LAST!

DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME? THROW IT DOWN!

I HEARD YOU.. BUT I WON'T THROW IT DOWN....!

THEN AS PASHENKO WATCHES, THE REPORTER CHANGES BEFORE HIS EYES INTO A REPULSIVE THING OF EVIL AND TERROR....

THE *KALD!* YOU *ARE THE KALD!*

YES, THE *KALD!*

YOU--YOU CAN'T TOUCH ME! I AM PROTECTED BY THE CHARM!

*FOOL!* YOUR CHARM WILL NOT WORK. I LEFT ONE THING OUT... THE ONE THING THAT WOULD HAVE SAVED YOU!

NOW YOU WILL DIE LIKE THE OTHERS AND MY SECRET DIES WITH YOU!

*HELP! HELP! YEEEEAHHH!*

THE NEXT DAY THEY FOUND PASHENKO IN THE OPEN GRAVE, A LOOK OF AWFUL TERROR FROZEN ON HIS FACE..

AHAHAHAHAHA!

EEEYAH!

IT'S THE WORK OF THAT MANIAC, ALL RIGHT.

PERHAPS HE DID KNOW SOMETHING. WE'LL NEVER KNOWN UNTIL THE MURDERER IS CAUGHT.

BUT WHO WILL CATCH HIM? WHO IS THERE THAT KNOWS THE TRUTH? AND WHO WILL BE THE KALD'S NEXT VICTIM?... *YOU?*

# THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

IT WAS the third day of the Carnival at Milan, in the year 1836. Donnizatti's immortal masterpiece, Lucia Di Lammermoor, had been performed for the first time at the San Carlos opera house, in Naples, a few months previous, and was making its triumphal tour through Italy.

Milan was in an uproar. The streets, squares, and arcades were illuminated brightly. The cathedral glittered with a thousand lanterns and the old, narrow streets echoed with the joyous laughter of sixty thousand pleasure seekers. The Scala opera house, ablaze with glory, had placed before the entrance, in letters of flame, the magic word Lucia.

It was six o'clock and the pit, gallery, boxes and stalls of the immense theater were jam packed. Four thousand eager people—four thousand anxious, soulful Italians—were waiting with subdued frenzy for the curtain to rise.

The heat was stifling. Finally, at half past six, the overture began. The immense throng was stilled at the first wave of the conductor's baton. With hushed excitement they awaited the beauteous prima donna, Alfieri, who had achieved a colossal success the night before. She was their favorite and their idol. For seven consecutive seasons she had sung in Milan and the audiences loved her, not only for her art and wondrous voice, but for her radiant beauty.

The curtain rose; the audience waited impatiently until the time arrived for Lucia to make her appearance on the stage. A frail, white-robed female advanced toward the footlights, her eyes were cast down, and she moved slowly towards the prompter's box. She stood still, raised her eyes and gazed fully upon the audience.

A cry of disappointment arose from the audience. "Where is Alfieri?—She is not Alfieri!"

The cries were echoed on all sides. Groans, hissing, and stamping of feet drowned out the orchestra. "NO! NO! Give us Alfieri!"

The woman confronting the audience was not in the least disconcerted. She walked leisurely around the stage. A man peeped out from the wings. It was the director, astonished and disturbed. "Who is that woman?" he cried. "It is not Alfieri!"

The men around him shook their heads. "No one knows. No one saw her enter."

Again the conductor raised his baton. The unknown prima donna seemed to rouse herself from her pensive lethargy, and moved solemnly to the center of the stage. The clamor ceased.

She raised her eyes to the level of the first tier, and stood in the full force of the light. She was wondrously beautiful, but white as snow, deathly, spectrally white. Not a tinge of color enhanced the marble beauty of her face.

Her eyes, black and deep, flashed luridly. When she dropped them their tint became sad, gray and obscure. Her lips shone red as vermillion, and looked like a gash—a hideous gash—when contrasted with the whiteness and rigidity of her face.

Her hair, long and purplish, hung down over her shoulders, which were pure and colorless as marble.

She wore no ornaments, but around her neck was a piece of broad, black velvet. Her dress was white.

She gazed weirdly upon the audience, and began, in a strange, vague, unearthly tone of voice, the ravishing aria Lucia sings upon her entrance.

I was there and I can recall perfectly the cold sensation I felt at the first few notes. It seemed to me as if some humid cavern had been opened suddenly, and that I had breathed the first icy breaths of air wafted from within.

Not a sound except her voice was heard. Her hands hung listlessly by her side. I do not remember how she finished. I heard her first strange tones change to a soft, sweet voice of fascinating bell-like brilliancy, and I awoke from a trance to hear the audience shriek and applaud in delight. It was the end of the first act.

"Who is she? Who is she? What a voice!" ehcoed on all sides. The director appeared, evidently anxious to find out who the beautiful songstress was, himself.

In the meantime I hurried behind the stage

to Alfieri's dressing-room, where I had often gone to chat with her. The room was lit, her costume for the second act lay ready, but that was all. Nothing showed that the room had been occupied.

I waited a few minutes, took a few puffs of my cigarette, and was about to leave when I discovered on the floor an earring of such uncommon size that I stooped to pick it up.

I stared at it in wonder. It was a solitaire diamond, richly set, of a slight greenish tint. I knew the value of such gems and estimated this one to be worth at least eight thousand dollars.

I hastened down to the director's office to turn it in, thinking it belonged either to Alfieri or the newcomer. The director wasn't there. At that moment the bell for the curtain rang. I hurried to my seat with the diamond in my hand.

The unknown woman again entered. She was, if possible, paler than before. She wore gloves this time, and her lips were not so cruelly red. She sang and I trembled—the audience quivered. It was a voice all fire, a voice all soul.

Again the curtain fell, again the house went mad with applause. But no one appeared.

I made my way through the lobby just as a friend of mine came from behind the scenes. "Have you seen her?" I asked.

"No, but Grazzini, the tenor has," he replied. "He tells me he has spoken to her—forced to do so by an attraction he could not fight. He told her of his admiration for her voice, for her. She answered him in four words. All she said was 'We shall meet again.'"

The bell rang and the curtain went up slowly. The lights seemed to burn badly, and the heat was worse than before, but on the entrance of the stranger a chill pervaded everyone.

We held our breaths as we listened. As I gazed upon her, charmed by her supernatural beauty, I noticed that from one of her ears hung a large bright stone. It was similar to the one I held in my hand. Scarcely had I seen it when she caught my eye. She smiled—the only time. I averted my glance. The music went on.

At last the mad scene neared its end. The musicians, as if ordered, ceased to play. They looked at her as she sang unaccompanied. It was terrible, unique and at the same time entrancing.

The climax arrived and the pains and pangs of Donnizatti's masterpiece vibrated on her lips as they had never done on anyone's lips before. She gazed wildly, stupidly about when she stopped, and I saw drops of blood ooze from her mouth and drip upon her dress. She fell heavily upon the stage and the curtains went down.

Half an hour later all Milan knew of the miraculous performance at the Scala. The last act of the opera was uninteresting, Lucia not appearing in it. All that happened was that the tenor, Grazziani took ill, and I afterward learned, died that night.

No one could find her, though all Milan searched. The director told me confidentially that he was as puzzled as anyone else. He swore he had never seen her before.

Full of conflicting thoughts I left the opera house at last and made my way home. My thoughts were filled with the voice I had heard only a couple of hours before. I passed the St. Italda Cemetery which was near where I was staying. It was late and from the distance came the noise of the festivities and of the carnival. I paid no attention.

Within a few feet of my house, which is separated by a high wall from the graveyard, I was brought up short by a strange sight.

Coming closer I saw that a tomb had been exhumed. The sod on either side was all strewn and scattered with footprints. To my horror I saw that the coffin was open. In it, wrapped rather loosely in a faded yellow shroud, was a human form.

I stooped over it and to my amazement, I saw a diamond earring in the lobe of the corpse's ear—the mate to the one I had found.

The moonlight, checkered by the boughs of the trees above me did not allow me to view the face. Trembling, I drew aside and lit a match. Approaching, I stared at the body. It was the spectral songstress!

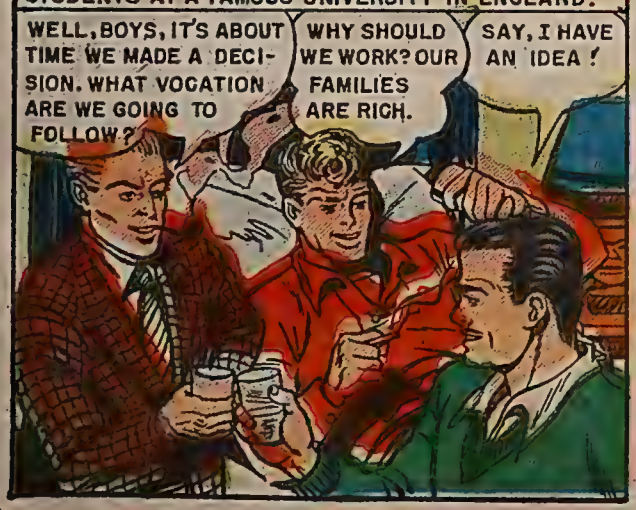
Utterly bewildered, and sick with horror, I grasped the coffin lid and replaced it over the livid face. On it was written in large letters:

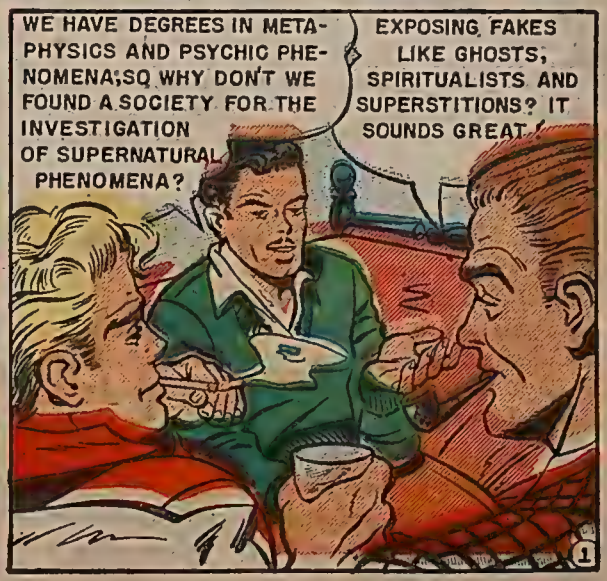
"VIRGINIA COSSELLI
Queen of Soprani
Died September, 1781,
Requiescat in peace."

A CURSE DOOMED ALL THOSE WHO ENTERED THE SACRED TOMB OF TUT-RA-HA TO VIOLENT DEATH...

# "CURSE OF THE TOMB"

GRADUATION DAY IS A GALA OCCASION FOR KURT RAND, WILLIAM AMES AND JOHN ROSE, BRILLIANT STUDENTS AT A FAMOUS UNIVERSITY IN ENGLAND.


WELL, BOYS, IT'S ABOUT TIME WE MADE A DECISION. WHAT VOCATION ARE WE GOING TO FOLLOW?
WHY SHOULD WE WORK? OUR FAMILIES ARE RICH.
SAY, I HAVE AN IDEA!


WE HAVE DEGREES IN METAPHYSICS AND PSYCHIC PHENOMENA; SO WHY DON'T WE FOUND A SOCIETY FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA?
EXPOSING FAKES LIKE GHOSTS, SPIRITUALISTS AND SUPERSTITIONS? IT SOUNDS GREAT!

AND SO THE "GHOST KILLERS" WAS BORN. THEIR FAME SPREADS RAPIDLY...

FEEL THAT DRAFT, BILL?

IT'S THE ANSWER TO OUR PROBLEM!

LATER WHEN THE LIGHTS GO ON...

MRS. LUCINI ATE A CAPSULE WHICH CONTAINED THE PROTOPLASM. A FAN BLEW IT OVER HER SHOULDER AND A TINY PROJECTOR IN THE BACK OF THE CHAIR CAST AN IMAGE ONTO A SCREEN.

THEY EXPLODE THE MYTH OF HAUNTED HOUSES...

THOSE *ARE* BELLS RINGING!

SAY, THIS PLACE IS OVERRUN WITH RATS.

MANY OF THESE ANTIQUE BELLS HAVE BONE HANDLES. WHEN THE RATS CHEW THE HANDLES THE BELLS RING!

THE GHOST KILLERS DEBUNK ALL SORTS OF SUPERSTITIONS...

MR. JONES WAS BORN ON FRIDAY THE 13TH, AND HAS 13 BLACK CATS...HE'S 80 AND HAS A FORTUNE OF 13 MILLION DOLLARS... NOW, IS THAT BAD LUCK?

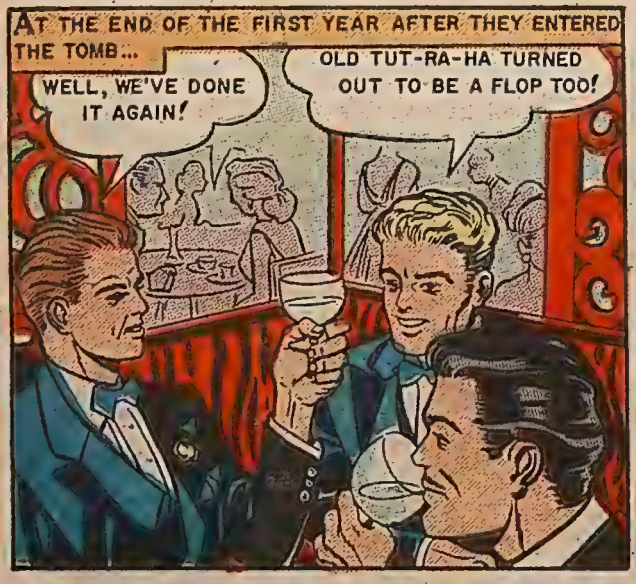
THEN ONE DAY A STORY APPEARS IN A LONDON NEWSPAPER...

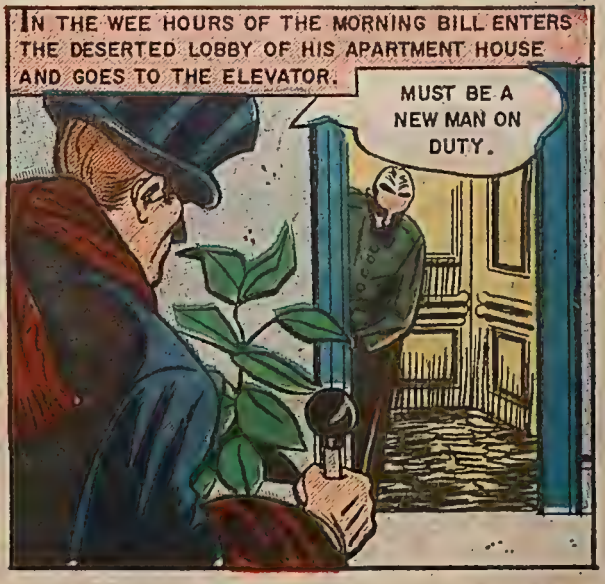
HAVE YOU FELLOWS READ ABOUT THIS EGYPTIAN TOMB. ALL THE PARTY OF SIX WHO DEFIED THE CURSE HAVE DIED!

A FEW WEEKS LATER...
WHAT DOES THE INSCRIPTION READ, MAFI?
"THOSE WHO PASS UNDER THIS ARCH AND DISTURB THE SLEEP OF THE SACRED TUT-RA-HA WILL BE DESTROYED BY FIRE, METAL, AND WATER!"
ALL SIX MEN IN THE ORIGINAL EXPEDITION ARE DEAD... BENTLEY WAS TRAPPED IN A BURNING APARTMENT, JONAS DIED OF LOCK-JAW FROM A RUSTY NAIL, MARVIN DROWNED...
GAD! LOOK AT THE WEALTH IN HERE.
DO YOU NOTICE A HORRIBLE STENCH?
YES! AND I FEEL COLD AIR ON MY BACK.
HA-HA. THE ATMOSPHERE IS GETTING YOU BOTH. WELL WE'VE DONE IT. NOW LET'S GO!
LATER AT A PRESS INTERVIEW AT THEIR HOTEL...
NOW, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS?
WE'RE GOING TO EXPOSE OURSELVES TO EVERY DANGER THAT PERTAINS TO THE CURSE... FIRE... METAL... AND WATER!
PRESS
THEM 'S THE "GHOST KILLER" FELLOWS. BLIMEY, THEY SURE TAKE THE CHANCES.
3

OH! THAT WAS CLOSE, EDWIN!
THEY'RE GOING OUT OF THEIR WAY TO MAKE THAT CURSE COME TRUE.

YOU ARE VERY BRAVE. NO ONE ELSE IN THE WORLD WOULD HAVE DARED TO COME ON THIS EXPERIMENTAL TRIAL IN THIS NEW DIVING BELL.


AT THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR AFTER THEY ENTERED THE TOMB...
WELL, WE'VE DONE IT AGAIN!
OLD TUT-RA-HA TURNED OUT TO BE A FLOP TOO!


IN THE WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING BILL ENTERS THE DESERTED LOBBY OF HIS APARTMENT HOUSE AND GOES TO THE ELEVATOR.
MUST BE A NEW MAN ON DUTY.

GOOD EVENING....SO YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK? THAT'S ALL RIGHT WITH ME.

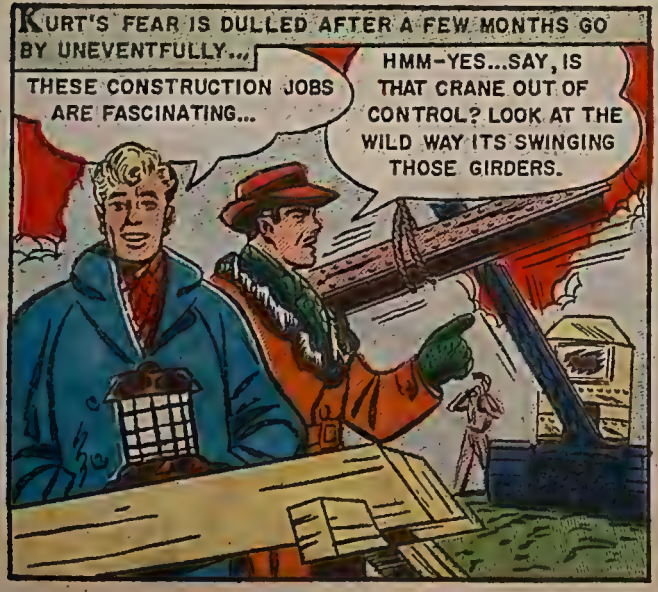
SUDDENLY, THE ELEVATOR COMES TO A STOP...
WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHY HAVE WE STOPPED? AGH! WHAT'S THAT SMOKE?

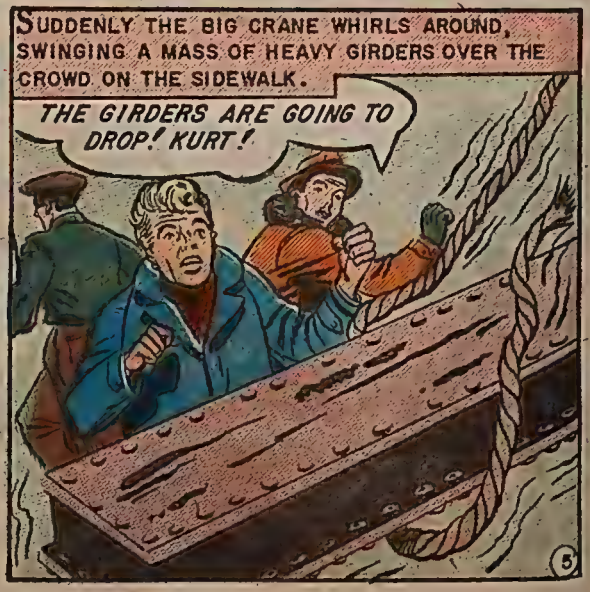
OH, NO! AHHHHHH!

AAAEEEEE

KURT AND JOHN ARRIVE AFTER THE FIRE HAS BEEN EXTINGUISHED.
I NOTICED A SMOULDERING WIRE IN THE CAR AND JUST LEFT FOR A MOMENT TO REPORT IT. HE MUST HAVE TRIED TO RUN IT HIMSELF.

LATER THAT NIGHT IN JOHN'S APARTMENT...
I DON'T LIKE IT, JOHN. DEATH BY FIRE: IT'S THE CURSE COMING TRUE!
GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF!


KURT'S FEAR IS DULLED AFTER A FEW MONTHS GO BY UNEVENTFULLY...
THESE CONSTRUCTION JOBS ARE FASCINATING...
HMM-YES...SAY, IS THAT CRANE OUT OF CONTROL? LOOK AT THE WILD WAY ITS SWINGING THOSE GIRDERS.


SUDDENLY THE BIG CRANE WHIRLS AROUND, SWINGING A MASS OF HEAVY GIRDERS OVER THE CROWD ON THE SIDEWALK.
THE GIRDERS ARE GOING TO DROP! KURT!
5

A-H-H-H-H-H-H!

THAT CRANE OPERATOR HAD A HEART ATTACK AND THE BLOODY THING RAN WILD! BRR... IT SURE MADE A MESS OF HIM!

MANY HOURS AND MANY DRINKS LATER, AT A LOCAL PUB...

BILL DEAD BY FIRE, KURT DEAD BY METAL... AND NEXT?... WATER! I CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES... I'VE GOT TO PROTECT MYSELF!

WITHIN A WEEK HE IS IN THE HEART OF THE SAHARA DESERT, HUNDREDS OF MILES FROM ANY WATER...

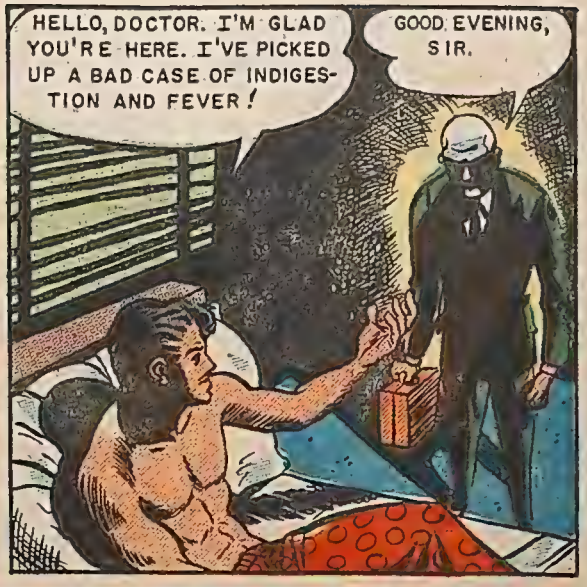
I SURVIVED THE PLANE TRIP OVER THE OCEAN. NOW I'M SAFE! IT'S HOT AND DULL, BUT IT'S SAFE!

ONE NIGHT, A FEW MONTHS LATER...

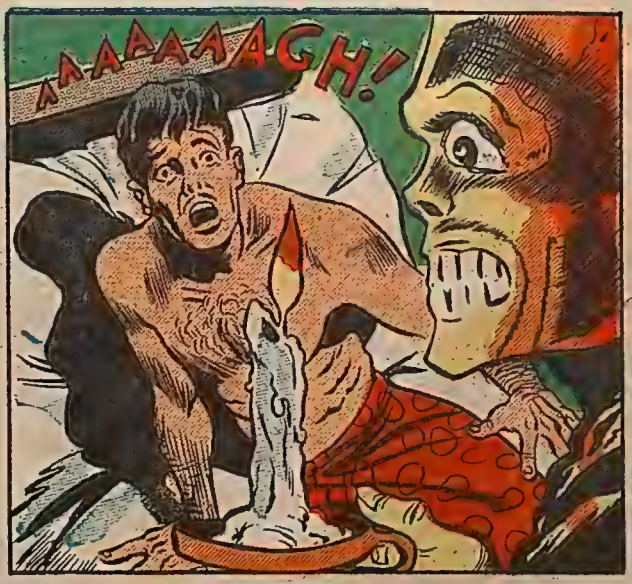
I CAN'T SLEEP WITH THIS INDIGESTION. I WONDER WHAT I ATE THAT CAUSED IT?

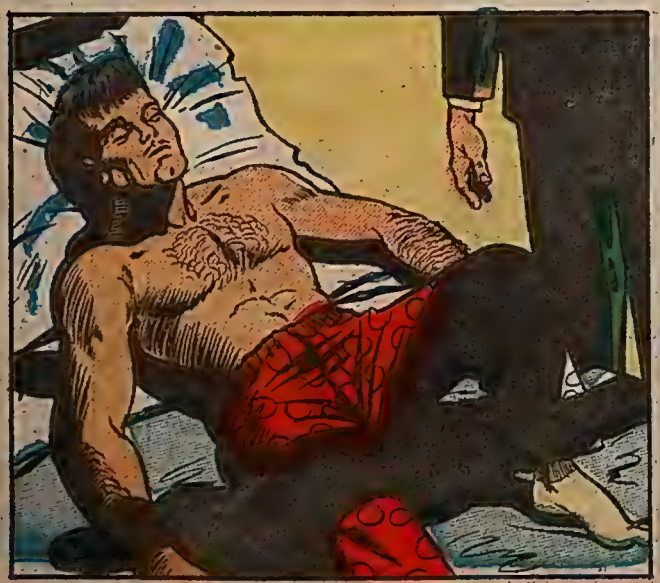
BETTER SEND ONE OF THE NATIVE BOYS FOR THE DOCTOR... AT LEAST I KNOW IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS... I'M DOOMED TO DIE BY WATER. IF I CAN STAY AWAY FROM THAT, I'LL LIVE FOREVER.

WHAT'S KEEPING THAT DOCTOR? THAT MUST BE HIM NOW.


HELLO, DOCTOR. I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE. I'VE PICKED UP A BAD CASE OF INDIGESTION AND FEVER!
GOOD EVENING, SIR.

YOUR CASE IS HOPELESS!
YOU'RE CRAZY! YOU DIDN'T EVEN EXAMINE ME... SAY, YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE THE DOCTOR FROM THE MISSION. LET ME SEE YOUR FACE!


AAAAAAGH!



A LITTLE WHILE LATER...
HE WAS DEAD WHEN I ARRIVED, FATHER... THE SIXTH ONE TONIGHT. WORD JUST REACHED US ABOUT AN HOUR AGO ABOUT THE PLAGUE IN ZERNA AND THE CONTAMINATED WELLS. OUR BOTTLED WATER COMES FROM THERE.
THE END... 7

SACRIFICE!
WHO KNOWS OF THE MYSTERIOUS AND ANCIENT RITES OF THE DRUIDS? WHO WOULD DARE PENETRATE THE BLACK CURTAIN THAT SEALS THEIR AWFUL MYSTERIES--DARE TO UNCOVER WHAT HAS MERCIFULLY BEEN CONCEALED FROM MANKIND FOR A THOUSAND YEARS? JAMES BELTANE DID. READ AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM!.....
MY SUBJECT WAS ANCIENT RELIGION, AND WHEN I RECEIVED A LEAVE FROM THE COLLEGE WHERE I TAUGHT, I TOOK MY WIFE AND VISITED THE HOME OF THE DRUIDS AT STONEHENGE, ENGLAND..
THE MONOLITHS--AT LAST!
HERE IS THE VERY SPOT WHERE THEY HELD THEIR RITES--TOOK THEIR HUMAN SACRIFICES. IF ONLY I COULD HAVE SEEN THEM!

EXCITEDLY I EXPLORED THE ANCIENT CIRCLE OF GIANT COLUMNS THAT HAD BEEN STANDING FOR A THOUSAND YEARS...

I SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT MARGARET. SHE WOULD HAVE ENJOYED THIS. I...OOPS!

I..I MUST HAVE BROKEN THROUGH A WEAKENED PART OF THE GROUND...A CASKET! I'VE UNCOVERED A CASKET!

WITH TREMBLING HANDS I PULLED THE CASKET FROM ITS RESTING PLACE AND REMOVED THE CONTENTS...

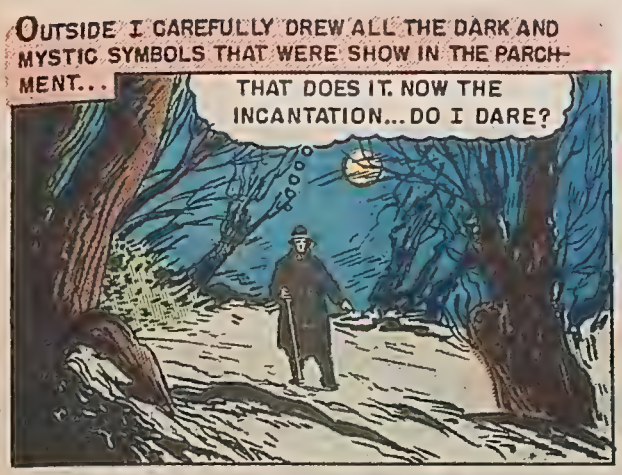
A PARCHMENT ROLL! CAN IT BE THAT I.. I HAVE DISCOVERED THE LOST RITES OF THE DRUIDS!

IT IS WRITTEN IN ANCIENT RUNIC! IT IS THE RITES! I WILL BE HAILED AS THE GREATEST SCHOLAR OF MY TIME!

I HASTENED BACK TO THE INN WHERE WE WERE STAYING AND SHOWED IT TO MY WIFE. IT FRIGHTENED HER AND SHE BEGGED ME TO PUT IT BACK. HOWEVER, I REFUSED.

MARGARET IS FOOLISH. THE GREATEST ARCHEOLOGICAL FIND OF THE CENTURY AND SHE WANTS ME TO THROW IT AWAY... HM, THIS IS INTERESTING...

THESE ARE SYMBOLS THAT WERE USED TO CALL THE DRUID GODS FOR THE SACRIFICES. THERE IS A GROVE OF OAKS JUST BEHIND THE INN--WONDER WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I TRIED THEM?


OUTSIDE I CAREFULLY DREW ALL THE DARK AND MYSTIC SYMBOLS THAT WERE SHOW IN THE PARCHMENT...
THAT DOES IT. NOW THE INCANTATION... DO I DARE?

I WAS FRIGHTENED, BUT SOMETHING DREW ME ON. AS I CALLED OUT THE NAMES OF THE GODS, A STRANGE THING HAPPENED...:
OSMUN! KORETH! GORN! COME! YOUR ALTAR AWAITS YOU!.... COME!

THE GODS HAVE HEARD YOUR CALL--AND SO HAVE WE.
YOU--YOU ARE THE DRUID PRIESTS! I... I MUST BE DREAMING!
RRRRRROOOOOMMM

YOU HAVE CALLED US BACK FOR THE ANCIENT SACRIFICE. ARE YOU READY?
I... I DON'T KNOW...

SUDDENLY A FEELING OF UNHOLY EVIL SEEMED TO TAKE POSSESSION OF ME. I WAS GLAD I HAD CALLED THEM....
YES--YES, I AM READY!
THEN COME! THE ALTAR AWAITS YOUR PRESENCE!

WE WENT STRAIGHT TO STONEHENGE, BUT NOW ALL WAS DIFFERENT. INSTEAD OF THE RUIN IT WAS NOW A LIVING PLACE...
THE PRIESTS! THE PRIESTS!
STEP UPON THE ALTAR, YOUR ROBES AWAIT YOU, HIGH ONE!
I FELT I HAD DONE THESE THINGS MANY TIMES BEFORE, AS I MOVED FORWARD AND WAS HELPED INTO A PRIESTS ROBE...
ARE YOU READY TO BEGIN THE RITES?
YES, I AM READY!
BRING OUT THE SACRIFICE! THE GODS GROW IMPATIENT!
WE BRING HER!
FROM THE DARKNESS BEHIND THE ALTAR THEY DRAGGED A GIRL OF GREAT BEAUTY. HER TERROR BROUGHT NO COMPASSION TO MY HEART...
NO! NO!
LET ME GO!
CHAIN HER TO THE ALTAR!
AS THEY CHAINED HER TO THE ALTAR I HAD A FEELING THAT I HAD KNOWN HER SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME...
LET ME GO! PLEASE LET ME GO!
WE ARE READY. HERE IS THE SPEAR OF SACRIFICE!
OZMUN, KORETH! GORN! HEAR US! COME TO US THIS NIGHT! HEAR OUR PLEA!
4

YOU HEED US AT LAST! COME, YOUR SACRIFICE AWAITS YOU! IT IS LONG SINCE YOU HAVE BEEN FED! COME!

OZMUN! KORETH! GORN! TAKE OUR GIFT!

HE COMES!

EEEEEE!

SUDDENLY THE SLAB SEEMED TO SPLIT ASUNDER AND THE TREE, COMING ALIVE, SEIZED THE GIRL AND HELD HER...

EEEEEEE!

ARAAAAAAASH!

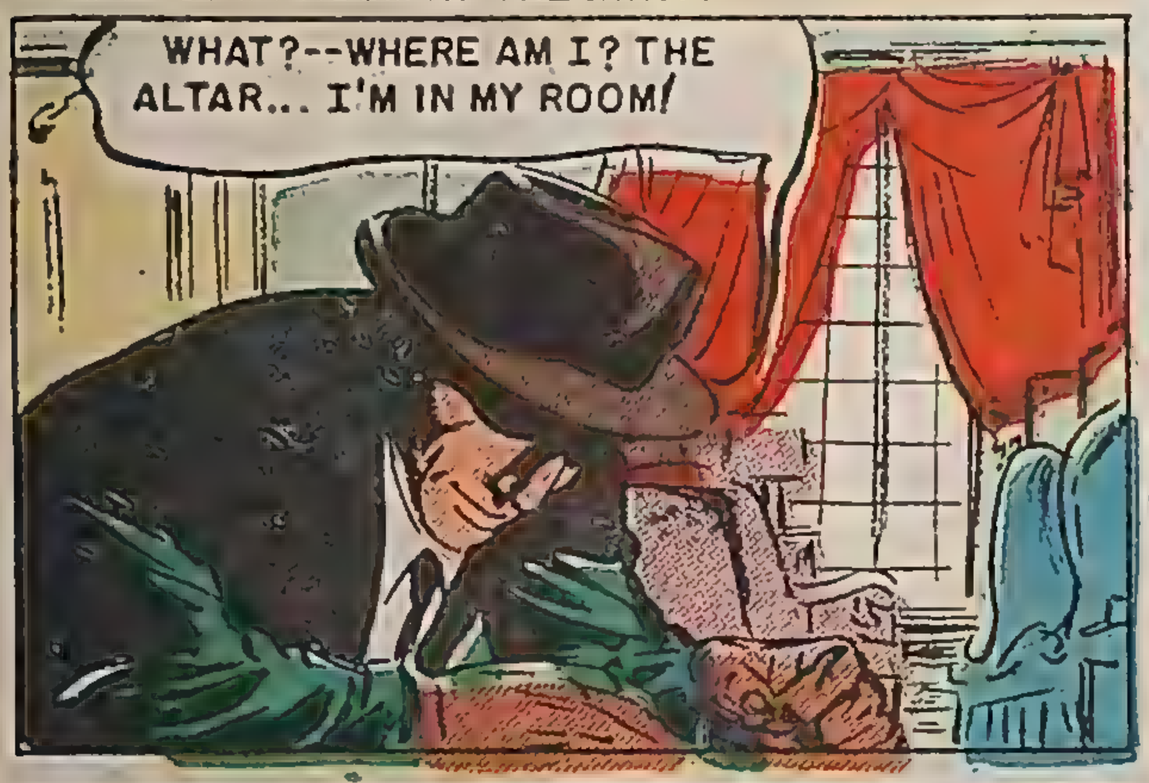
THEN, AS IF BY AN UNSPOKEN COMMAND I FELT THE SPEAR RAISE AND I WAS DRAWN FORWARD...

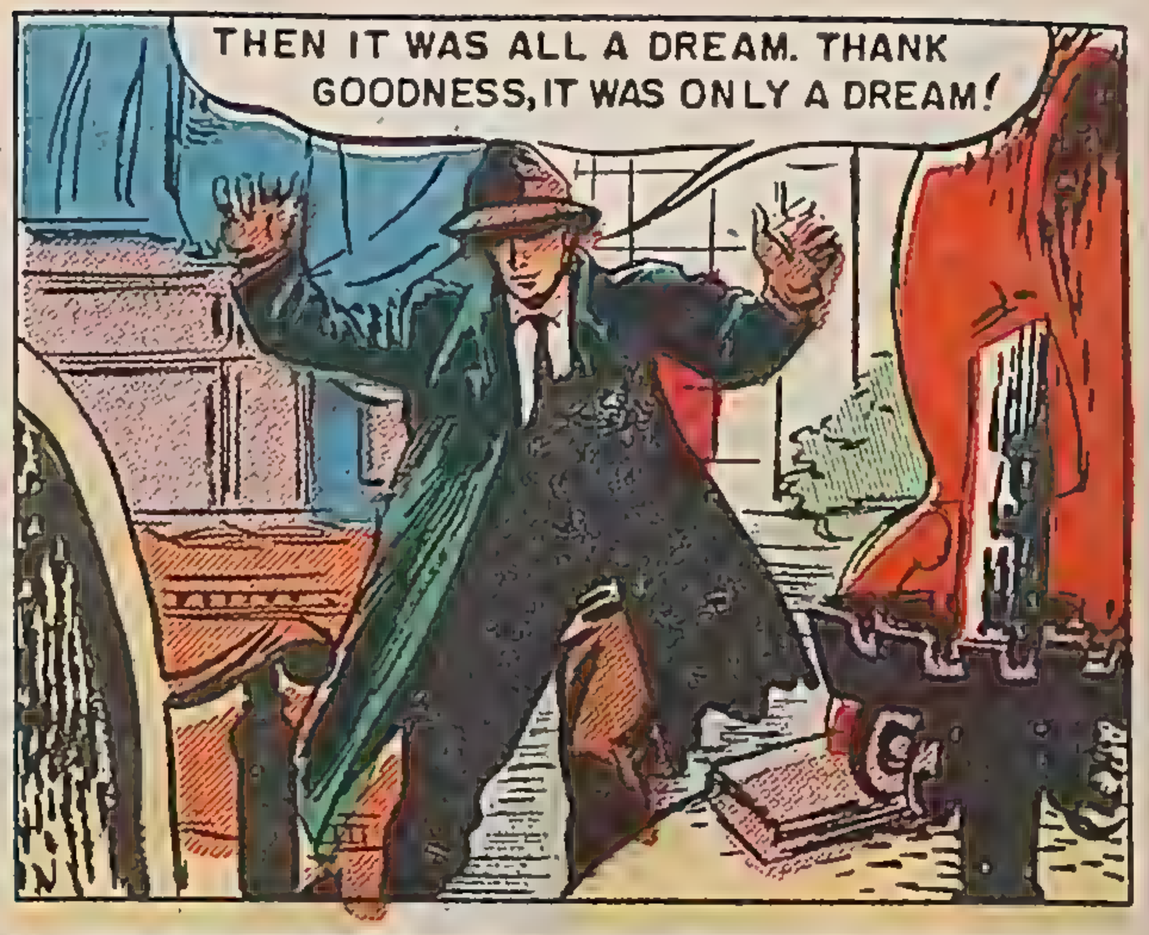
SHE IS YOURS, MIGHTY ONES! SHE IS YOURS!

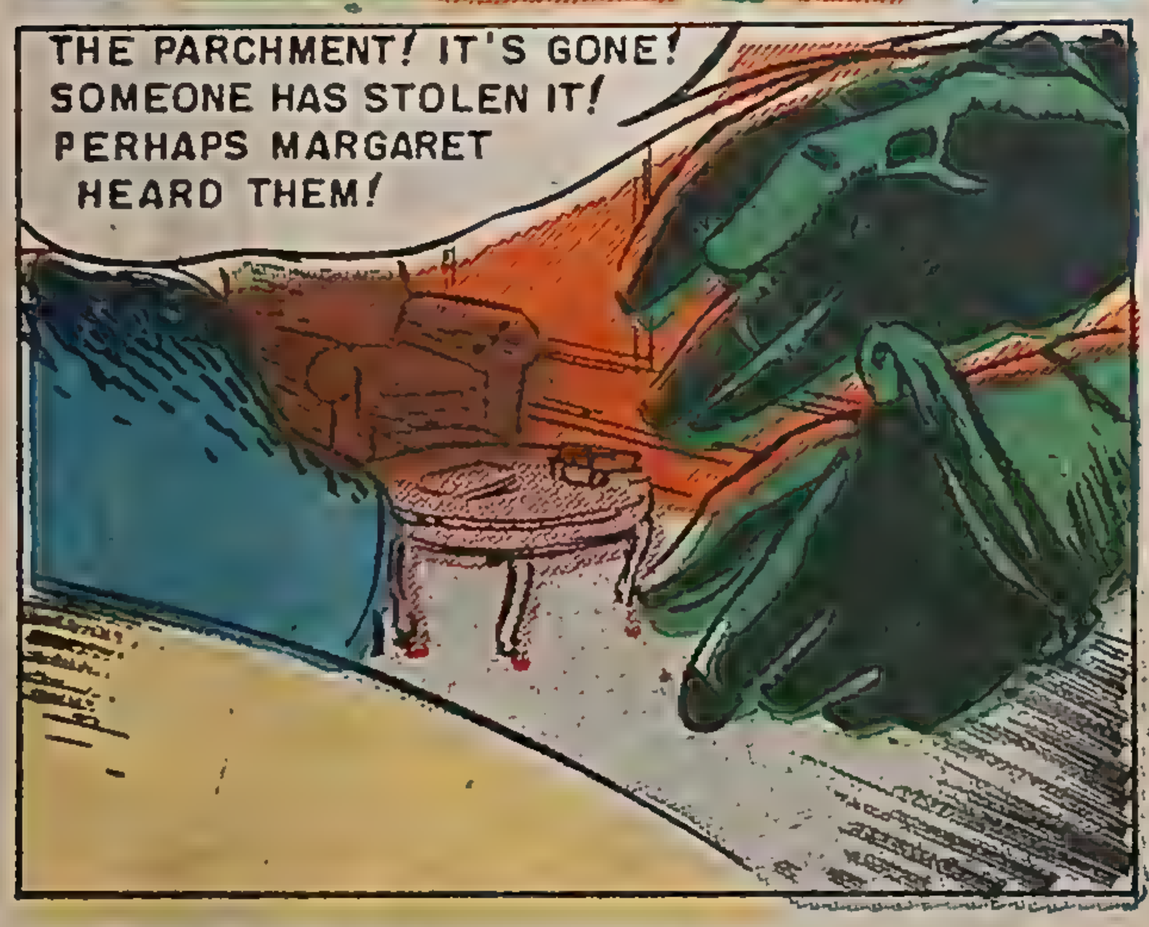
THEN, AS IF SOME ONE ELSE WERE WITHIN ME I FELT MY ARM SHOOT FORWARD...

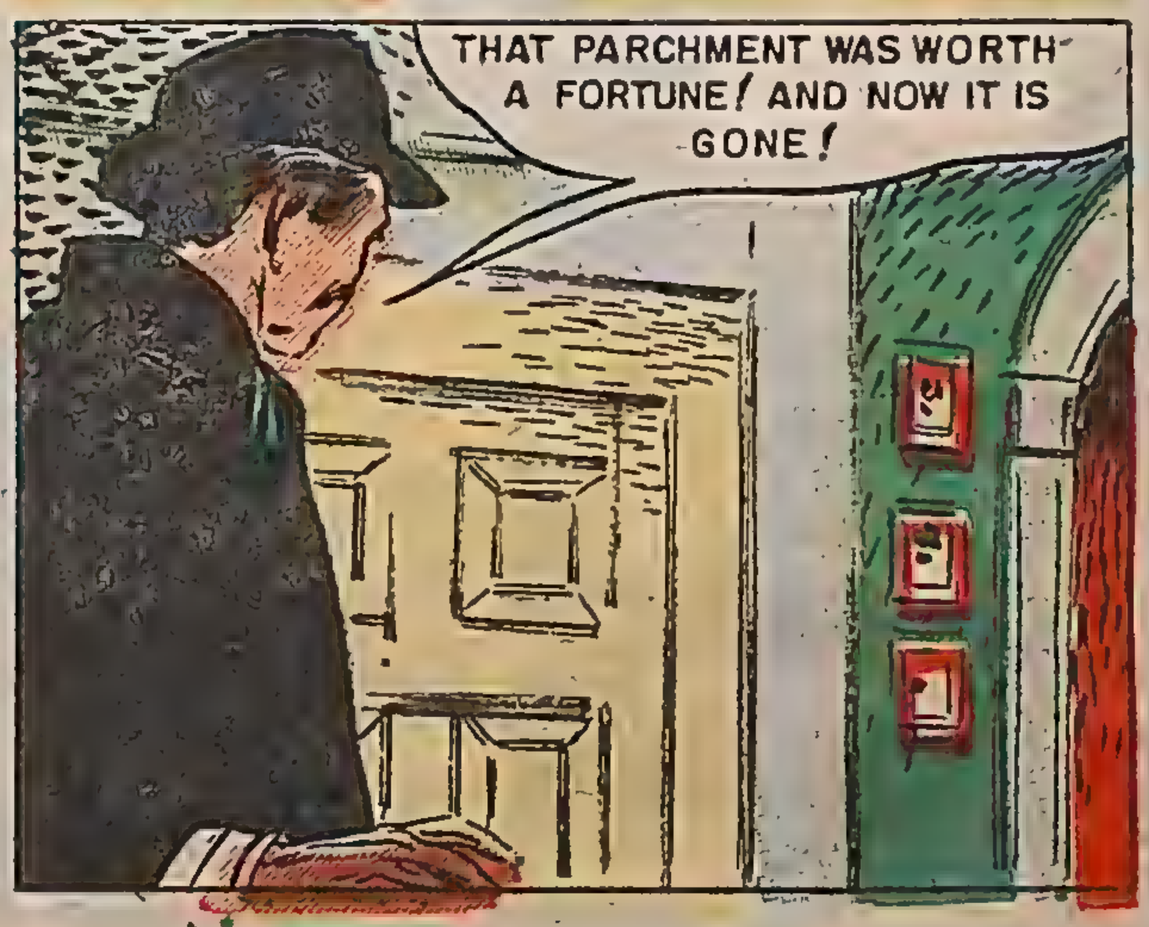
UHHHH!

WHEN THE BLOOD-RED MIST THAT SURROUNDED ME CLEARED, I FOUND MYSELF LYING DAZED ON THE FLOOR OF MY ROOM AT THE INN...

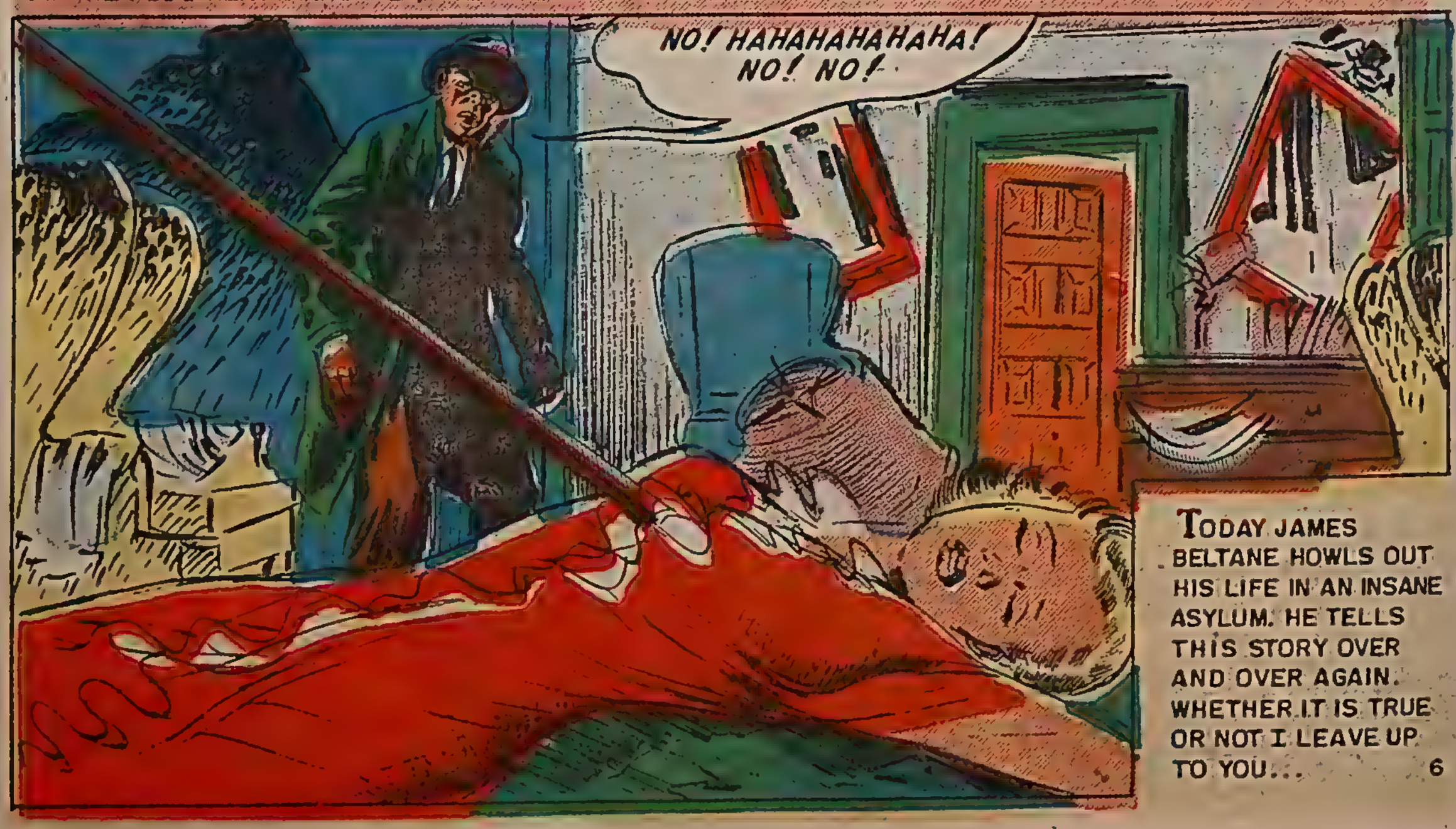



NIGHTMARE, DID I SAY? WHEN I OPENED THAT DOOR I KNEW THAT IT WAS NO NIGHTMARE. THERE BEFORE ME ON THE FLOOR LAY MARGARET, THE SACRIFICIAL SPEAR DRIVEN THROUGH HER HEART...

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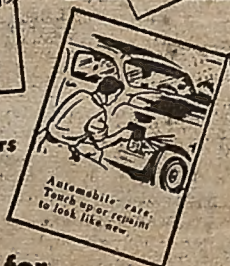


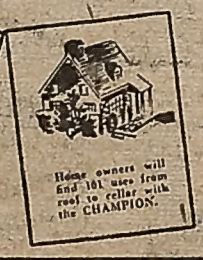

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# TAKE OFF EXCESS WEIGHT!

## *Don't Stay FAT—You Can LOSE POUNDS and INCHES SAFELY* Without Risking HEALTH

LIKE a magic wand, the "Spot Reducer" obeys your every wish. Most any part of your body where it is loose and flabby, wherever you have extra weight and inches, the "Spot Reducer" can aid you in acquiring a youthful, slender and graceful figure. The beauty of this scientifically designed Reducer is that the method is so simple and easy, the results quick, sure and harmless. No exercises or strict diets. No steambaths, drugs or laxatives.

With the SPOT REDUCER you can now enjoy the benefits of RELAXING, SOOTHING massage in the privacy of your own home! Simple to use—just plug in, grasp handle and apply over most any part of the body—stomach, hips, chest, neck, thighs, arms, buttocks, etc. The relaxing, soothing massage breaks down FATTY TISSUES, tones the muscles and flesh, and the increased awakened blood circulation carries away waste fat—helps you regain and keep a firmer and more GRACEFUL FIGURE!

### YOUR OWN PRIVATE MASSEUR AT HOME

When you use the Spot Reducer, it's almost like having your own private masseur at home. It's fun reducing this way! It not only helps you reduce and keep slim—but also aids in the relief of those types of aches and pains—and tired nerves that can be helped by massage! The Spot Reducer is handsomely made of light weight aluminum and rubber and truly a beautiful invention you will be thankful you own. AC 110 volts. Underwriters Laboratory approved.

# TRY THE SPOT REDUCER 10 DAYS FREE IN YOUR OWN HOME!

Mail this coupon with only $1 for your Spot Reducer on approval. Pay postman $8.95 plus delivery—or send $9.95 (full price) and we ship postage prepaid. Use it for ten days in your own home. Then if not delighted return Spot Reducer for full purchase price refund. Don't delay! You have nothing to lose—except ugly, embarrassing, undesirable pounds of FAT. MAIL COUPON now!

## ALSO USE IT FOR ACHES AND PAINS

### CAN'T SLEEP:

Relax with electric Spot Reducer. See how soothing its gentle massage can be. Helps you sleep when massage can be of benefit.

### MUSCULAR ACHES:

A handy helper for transient relief of discomforts that can be aided by gentle, relaxing massage.

**LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE**

### USED BY EXPERTS

Thousands have lost weight this way — in hips, abdomen, legs, arms, necks, buttocks, etc. The same method used by stage, screen and radio personalities and leading reducing salons. The Spot Reducer can be used in your spare time, in the privacy of your own room.

### ORDER IT TODAY!

**SENT ON APPROVAL—MAIL COUPON NOW!**

SPOT REDUCER, Dept. B270
318 Market St., Newark, N. J.

Please send me the Spot Reducer for 10 days trial period. I enclose $1. Upon arrival I will pay postman only $8.95 plus postage and handling. If not delighted I may return SPOT REDUCER within 10 days for prompt refund of full purchase price.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

☐ SAVE POSTAGE—check here if you enclose $9.95 with coupon. We pay all postage and handling charges. Same money back guarantee applies.

LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE

MAIL THIS 10 DAY FREE TRIAL COUPON NOW!

# BLACKHEADS "PET HATE"

## Say Men, Girls in Choosing Date

What a "black mark" is the blackhead . . . according to men and girls popular enough to be choosy about dates!

"Nobody's dreamboat!" "Nobody's date bait!" And that's not all that's said of those who are careless about blackheads. But blackheads ARE ugly! Blackheads ARE grimy! And they DON'T look good in close-ups!

So can you blame the fellow who says, "Sure, I meet lots of girls who look cute at first glance. But if, on that second glance, I see dingy blackheads, it's *good night!*"

Or can you blame the girl who confesses, "I hate to go out with a fellow who has blackheads. If he's careless about that you're sure he'll embarrass you in other ways, too!"

But you — are YOUR ears burning? Well, you've company and, sad to say, good company. There are lots of otherwise attractive fellows and girls who could date anyone they like if they'd only realize how offensive blackheads are . . . and how easily and quickly they could get rid of them . . . if they *want* to!

## "He-Man" Often Guilty of Blackhead Crime

Take your "he-man" . . . super at track, games, sports of all kinds . . . who thinks that after just a shower he's ready to go anywhere! And won't the girls all admire his muscles!

Sure they would! But not many dance floors are set up for hurdle races! You can't show off your snappy left hook when only cokes are in the ring. The "he-man" who's also clean-cut, will get the breaks wherever he is.

## Even Cute Girls Become Careless

Easy, too easy, for a girl to think that if she has the latest in clothes and hair-do she needn't bother about blackheads. A little more make-up, she guesses, will take care of that. BUT MAKE-UP WON'T HIDE BLACKHEADS! Not unless it's plaster of paris, maybe! And even good make-up "slips" at a dance! So don't take chances, cute though you may be!

### TAKE THESE TIPS TO BANISH BLACKHEADS

Keep skin clean by washing morning and night with warm, almost hot, water. Use good soap and plenty of it. And finish with cool water.

Extract every blackhead as soon as you see it—with a SAFE extractor. Don't use finger nails. Don't squeeze. That may mean infection, injured tissues, a marred skin.

*Just be clean! Be quick! And be safe! That's easy!* And that's ALL!

I WONDER WHY WE'RE NOT POPULAR SIS?
ASK YOUR FRIEND TOM
TOM, WHY DON'T SIS AND I GET INVITED TO PROMS AND PARTIES
FRANKLY, JIM IT'S THOSE UGLY BLACKHEADS

FELLOWS! GIRLS!
Keep Skin Clear and Clean!

# UGLY BLACKHEADS OUT in Seconds with VACUTEX

## NEW! SCIENTIFIC! VACUUM ACTION!

Amazing new VACUTEX is painless . . . safe . . . fast! In seconds you are rid of those ugly blackheads that clog the pores . . . make your skin look grimy and dingy . . . give others such a wrong impression of you. VACUTEX creates a gentle vacuum pressure around the blackhead and extracts it—quickly!—without injury to tender skin tissues. Keep skin always clear this new scientific way. Without painful squeezing! Without dangerous infection from germy fingers! Just place VACUTEX over blackhead and draw back extractor. Blackhead's out! Simple! But you'll be delighted by your instantly improved appearance. Others will notice your clearer, cleaner skin! Try VACUTEX — now!

RUSH COUPON NOW!

10 DAY TRIAL OFFER

Don't send a penny. Mail coupon and pay postman only $1.00 plus postage. Or save all postage by enclosing $1.00 with guarantee coupon. If not thrilled to be rid of embarrassing hated blackheads this new quick way — just return VACUTEX in 10 days and get $1 back. Order today!

No Squeezing
No Infection
No Injury
to Skin Tissues!

Just place VACUTEX over blackhead—release extractor—and blackhead's out!

10 DAY TRIAL GUARANTEE

BALLCO PRODUCTS COMPANY, Dept. 508
19 West 44th St., New York 18, N. Y.

☐ Enclosed find $1.00. Send me VACUTEX postpaid.
☐ Ship C.O.D. I will pay postman $1.00 plus postage.

My dollar will be refunded if I am not delighted.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

SORRY NO C.O.D. OUTSIDE OF U.S.A.